

THE NCSTM
The National Citizen SurveyTM

Western Springs, IL

Community Livability Report
2015



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About

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS) report is about the “livability” of Western Springs. The phrase “livable community” is used here to evoke a place that is not simply habitable, but that is desirable. It is not only where people do live, but where they want to live.

Great communities are partnerships of the government, private sector, community-based organizations and residents, all geographically connected. The NCS captures residents’ opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement).

The Community Livability Report provides the opinions of a representative sample of 1,312 residents of the Village of Western Springs. The margin of error around any reported percentage is 3% for the entire sample. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover.

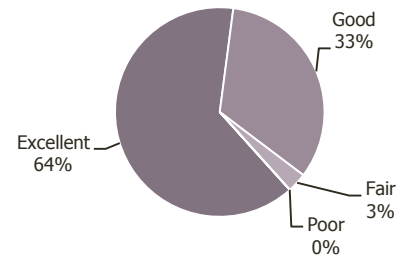


Quality of Life in Western Springs

Almost all residents rated the quality of life in Western Springs as excellent or good. This rating was higher than the national benchmark (see Appendix B of the *Technical Appendices* provided under separate cover).

Shown below are the eight facets of community. The color of each community facet summarizes how residents rated it across the three sections of the survey that represent the pillars of a community – Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation. When most ratings across the three pillars were higher than the benchmark, the color for that facet is the darkest shade; when most ratings were lower than the benchmark, the color is the lightest shade. A mix of ratings (higher and lower than the benchmark) results in a color between the extremes.

Overall Quality of Life



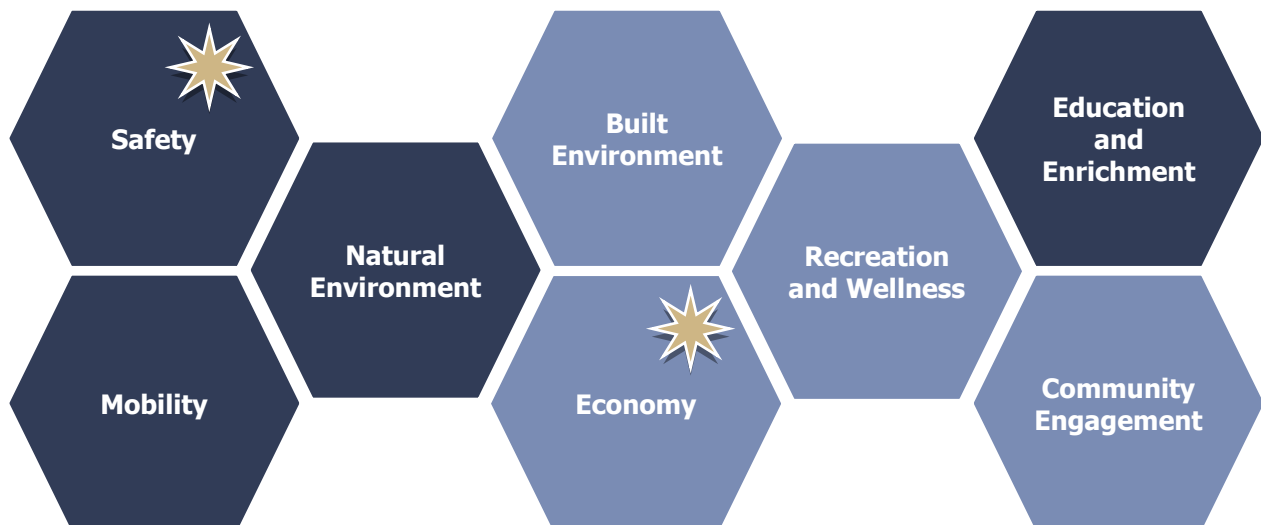
In addition to a summary of ratings, the image below includes one or more stars to indicate which community facets were the most important focus areas for the community. Residents identified Safety and Economy as priorities for the Western Springs community in the coming two years. It is noteworthy that Western Springs residents gave strong ratings to Safety as well as to Mobility, Natural Environment and Education and Enrichment. Ratings for Economy, Built Environment, Recreation and Wellness and Community Engagement were positive and similar to other communities. This overview of the key aspects of community quality provides a quick summary of where residents see exceptionally strong performance and where performance offers the greatest opportunity for improvement. Linking quality to importance offers community members and leaders a view into the characteristics of the community that matter most and that seem to be working best.

Details that support these findings are contained in the remainder of this Livability Report, starting with the ratings for Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation and ending with results for Western Springs’s unique questions.

Legend

- Higher than national benchmark
- Similar to national benchmark
- Lower than national benchmark

- Most important



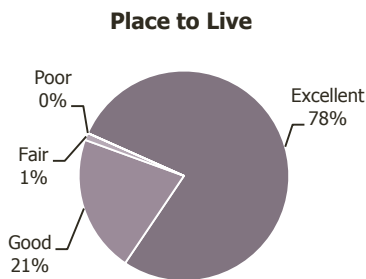
Community Characteristics

What makes a community livable, attractive and a place where people want to be?

Overall quality of community life represents the natural ambience, services and amenities that make for an attractive community. How residents rate their overall quality of life is an indicator of the overall health of a community. In the case of Western Springs, 99% rated the Village as an excellent or good place to live. Respondents' ratings of Western Springs as a place to live were higher than ratings in other communities across the nation.

In addition to rating the Village as a place to live, respondents rated several aspects of community quality including Western Springs as a place to raise children and to retire, their neighborhood as a place to live, the overall image or reputation of Western Springs and its overall appearance. More than 90% of residents rated Western Springs' overall image, overall appearance, their neighborhood as a place to live and Western Springs as a place to live as excellent or good; all of these ratings were higher than the national benchmarks.

Delving deeper into Community Characteristics, survey respondents rated over 40 features of the community within the eight facets of Community Livability. Almost all residents rated the overall feeling of safety and feeling safe in Western Springs' downtown/commercial area as excellent or good, which were higher than the national benchmark. Ratings within Mobility were generally higher than the national benchmark with the exception of paths and walking trails, which had ratings similar to those in comparison communities. All aspects of Natural Environment were rated higher than the national benchmarks and were rated positively by more than 90% of respondents. Overall built environment and public places where people want to spend time received ratings of excellent or good by more than three-fourths of residents (higher than the national benchmark). Ratings within Economy were all similar to the national benchmark with the exception of ratings for overall economic health, which was higher than the national benchmark. Within the facet of Recreation and Wellness, the availability of affordable quality health care received ratings higher than the national benchmark with 73% of residents rating it as excellent or good. Ratings for education and enrichment opportunities, K-12 education and child care/preschool were all higher than the national benchmark. Within Community Engagement, over 80% of respondents gave positive ratings to neighborliness, a rating that was higher than the national benchmark.



Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



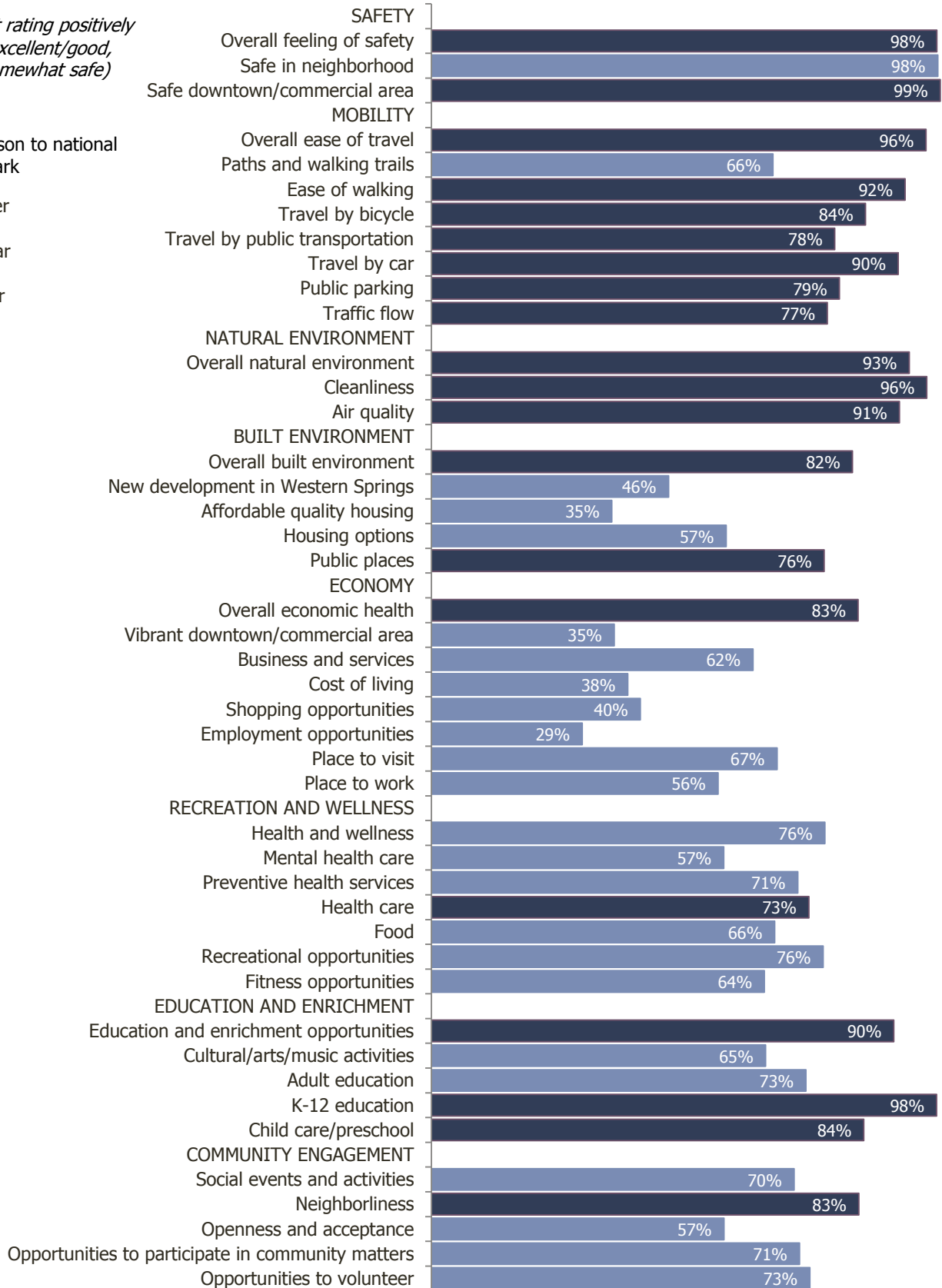
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Figure 1: Aspects of Community Characteristics

*Percent rating positively
(e.g., excellent/good,
very/somewhat safe)*

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower



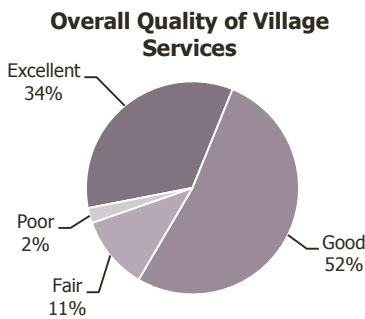
Governance

How well does the government of Western Springs meet the needs and expectations of its residents?

The overall quality of the services provided by Western Springs as well as the manner in which these services are provided are a key component of how residents rate their quality of life. The quality of services provided by Western Springs was rated positively by nearly 9 in 10 respondents, which was a higher rating than seen in comparable communities; services provided by the Federal Government was rated positively by about 4 in 10 respondents and was similar to the national benchmark.

Survey respondents also rated various aspects of Western Springs’s leadership and governance. More than 70% of residents rated being honest, treating all residents fairly and acting in the best interest of Western Springs as excellent or good and were rated higher than ratings given in other communities across the nation. More than 8 in 10 residents gave favorable ratings to customer service and about two-thirds favorably rated the value of services for taxes paid, the overall direction of Western Springs, welcoming citizen involvement and confidence in Village government.

Respondents evaluated over 30 individual services and amenities available in Western Springs. Within the facet of Safety, over 80% of residents rated Western Springs’ ambulance/EMS, crime prevention, fire prevention and emergency preparedness as excellent or good; these ratings were higher than the national benchmark. Ratings for snow removal and bus or transit services were also higher than the national benchmark. Almost all respondents positively rated recycling and yard waste pick-up services, and both received ratings higher than in comparison communities. All aspects of Built Environment received ratings that were generally favorable and similar to the national benchmark with the exception of code enforcement, which received ratings higher than the national benchmark. The facet of Recreation and Wellness also saw ratings that were similar to the national benchmark for all aspects. The Thomas Ford Memorial Library was rated as excellent or good by 94% of residents (higher than the national benchmark). Within Community Engagement, ratings for public information were higher than the national benchmark.

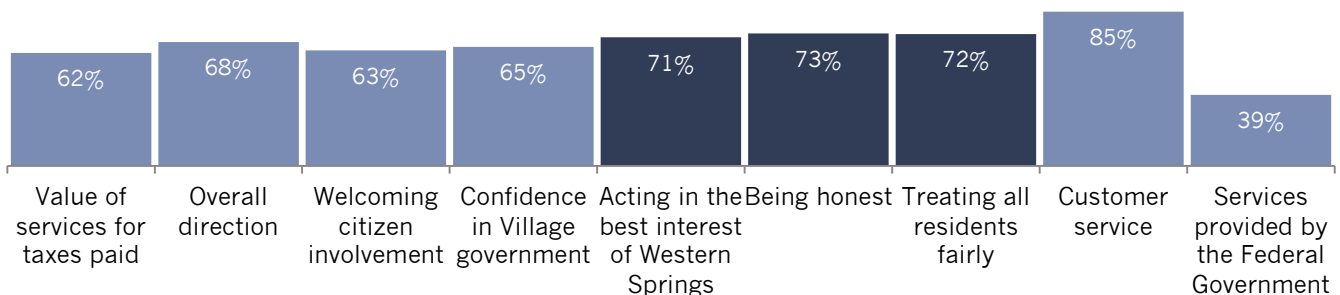


positively rated recycling and yard waste pick-up services, and both received ratings higher than in comparison communities. All aspects of Built Environment received ratings that were generally favorable and similar to the national benchmark with the exception of code enforcement, which received ratings higher than the national benchmark. The facet of Recreation and Wellness also saw ratings that were similar to the national benchmark for all aspects. The Thomas Ford Memorial Library was rated as excellent or good by 94% of residents (higher than the national benchmark). Within Community Engagement, ratings for public information were higher than the national benchmark.

Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national benchmark

■ Higher ■ Similar ■ Lower



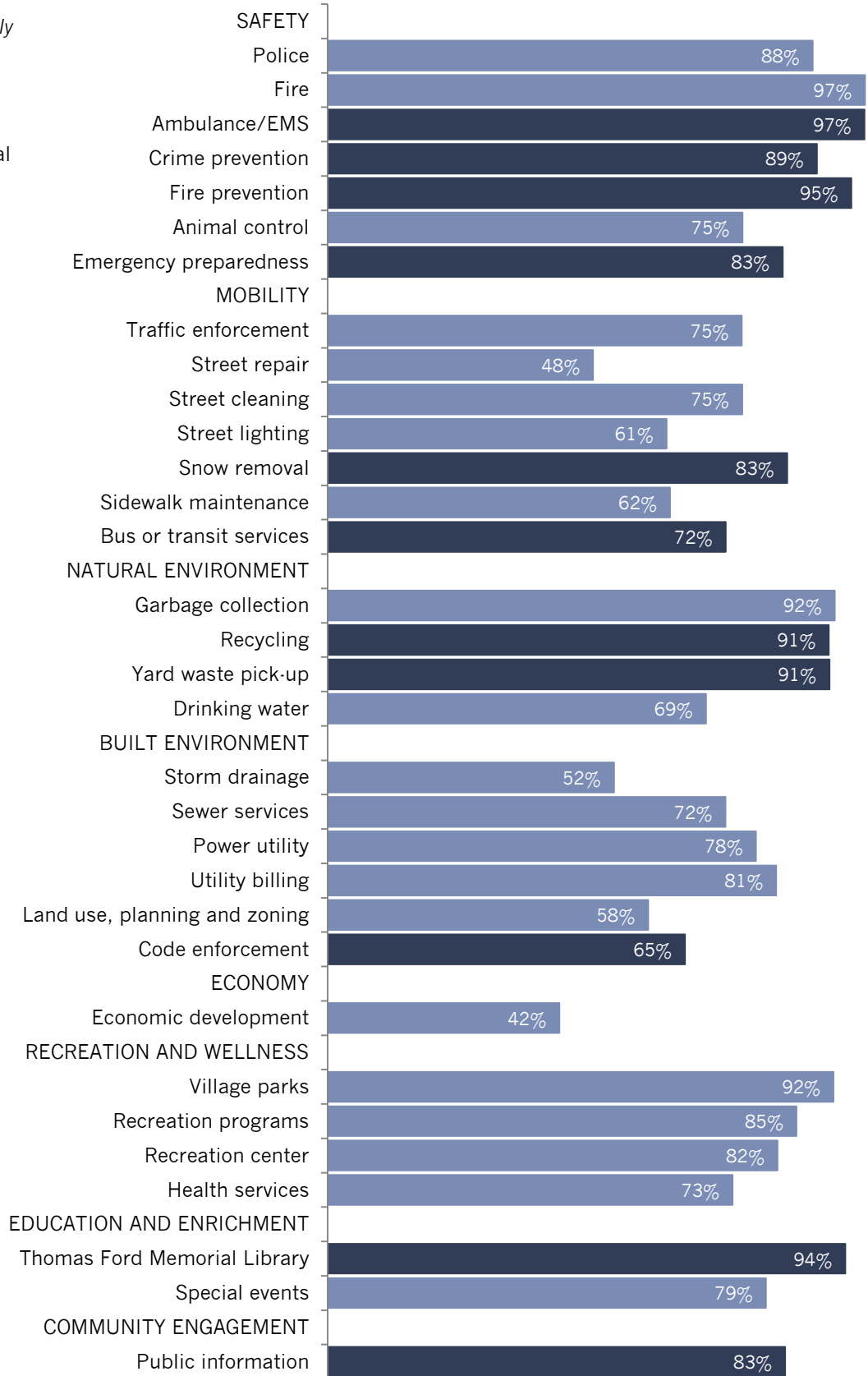
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Figure 2: Aspects of Governance

Percent rating positively
(e.g., excellent/good)

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

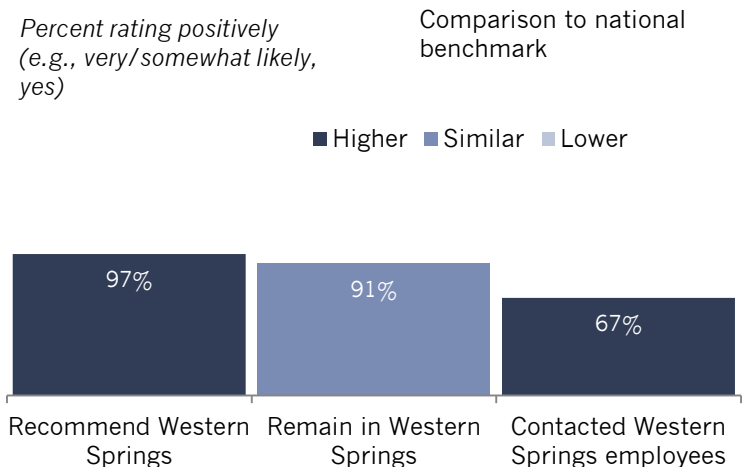
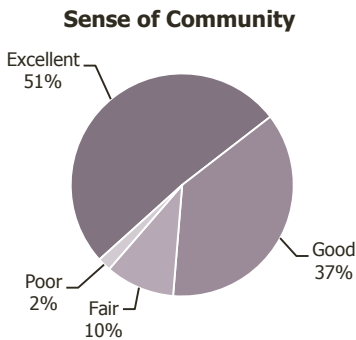


Participation

Are the residents of Western Springs connected to the community and each other?

An engaged community harnesses its most valuable resource, its residents. The connections and trust among residents, government, businesses and other organizations help to create a sense of community; a shared sense of membership, belonging and history. Most residents (88%) rated Western Springs' sense of community as excellent or good, a rating that was much higher than seen in comparison communities. Almost all respondents reported being somewhat or very likely to recommend Western Springs and to remain in Western Springs, and about two-thirds had contacted Western Springs employees in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The survey included 30 activities and behaviors for which respondents indicated how often they participated in or performed each, if at all. Rates of participation varied across facets. Almost all residents did not report a crime (higher than the national benchmark) whereas only around 2 in 10 residents stocked supplies for an emergency (lower than the national benchmark). More than 70% of residents reported using public transportation instead of driving and walking or biking instead of driving; these rates of participation were higher than seen in other communities. Almost all residents (98%) reported recycling at home, which is a rate higher than the national benchmark. Within Built Environment, Western Springs residents reported a higher rate of not being under housing cost stress and not observing a code violation than residents in comparison communities. Less than one-fourth of residents reported working in Western Springs, a rate that is lower than the national benchmark. Rates of participation within the facet of Recreation and Wellness were all similar to rates found in communities across the nation. Within Education and Enrichment, rates of participation for using the Thomas Ford Memorial Library and attending a Village-sponsored event were higher than the national benchmark. Over 9 in 10 residents reported doing a favor for a neighbor and voting in local elections, ratings that were both higher than the national benchmark.



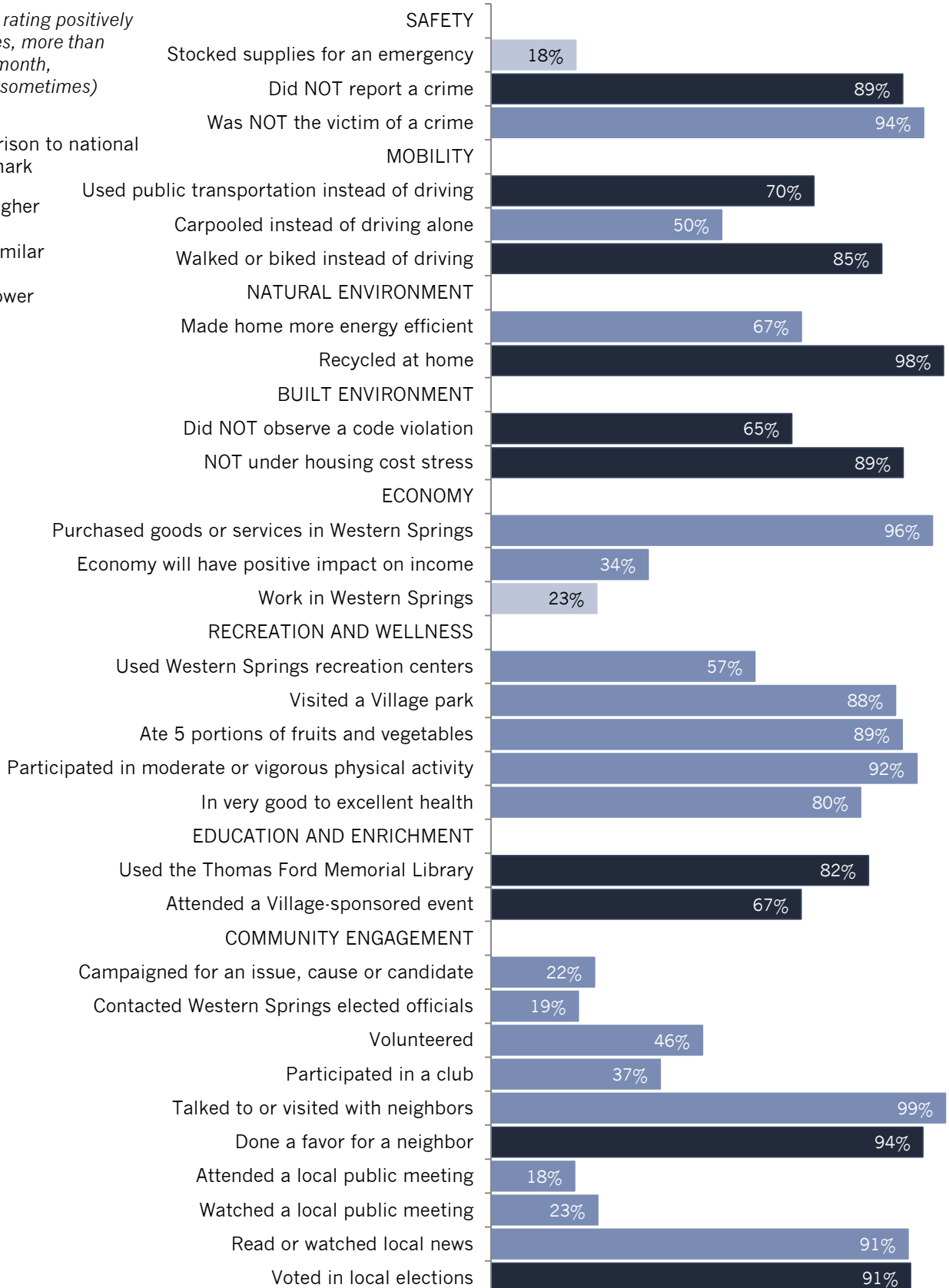
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Figure 3: Aspects of Participation

Percent rating positively
(e.g., yes, more than
once a month,
always/sometimes)

Comparison to national
benchmark

- Higher
- Similar
- Lower

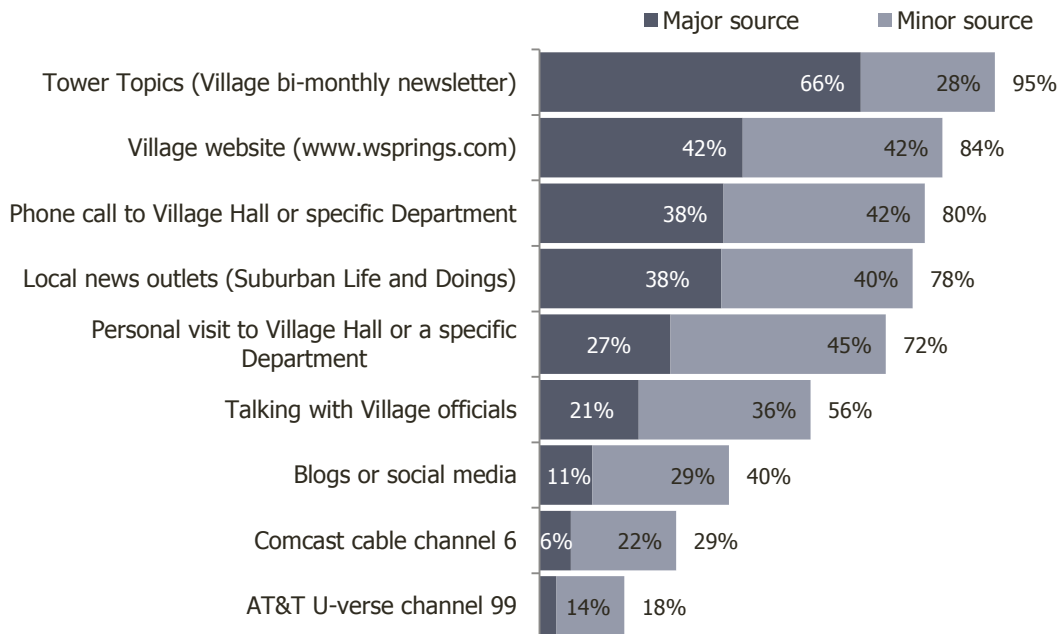


Special Topics

The Village of Western Springs included seven questions of special interest on The NCS. The first question asked residents how much of a source, if at all, they considered specific sources to be for obtaining information about the Village of Western Springs. Almost all residents (95%) said they considered Tower Topics to be a major or minor source of information, followed by the Village website (84%) and a phone call to Village Hall or specific department (80%). Residents were least likely to use AT&T U-verse channel 99 for obtaining information.

Figure 4: Sources of Information

Please indicate how much of a source, if at all, you consider each of the following to be for obtaining information about the Village of Western Springs government, services, activities, events and local issues:

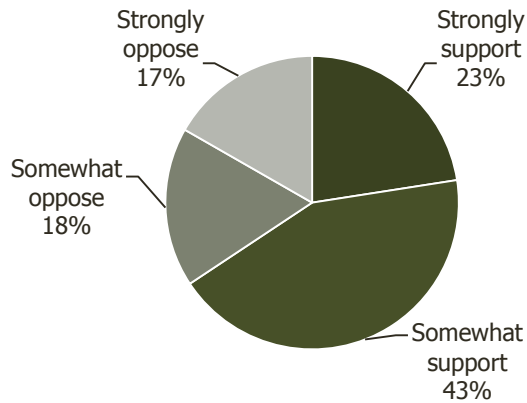


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The second question asked residents to what extent they would support or oppose a property tax increase of an average of \$70 per year to support the roadway construction program over the next ten years. Around one-fourth of residents said they would strongly support a property tax increase and more than 4 in 10 said they would somewhat support the increase.

Figure 5: Support for Roadway Construction Program

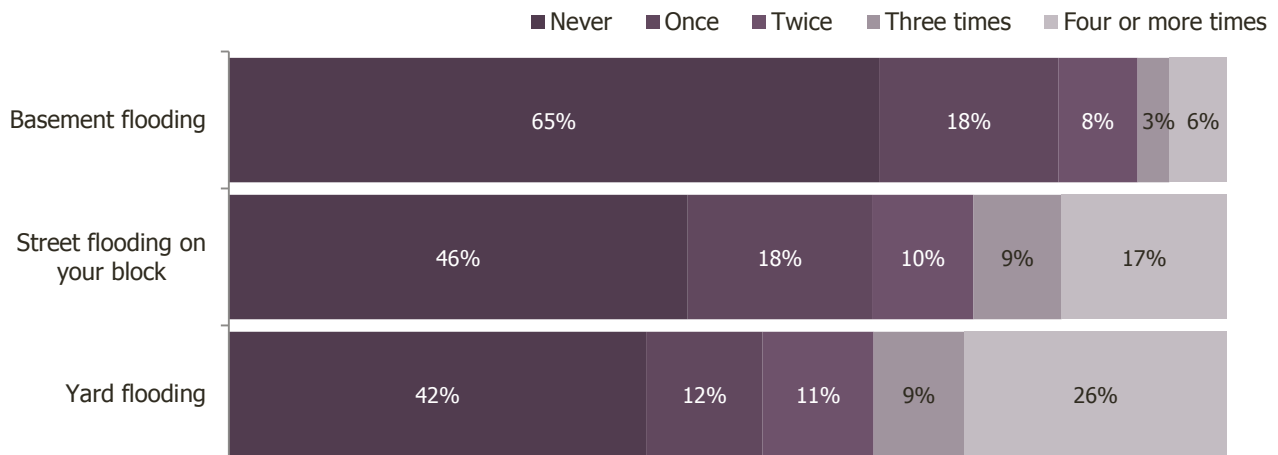
In 2008, the voters of the Village approved the issuance of bonds to fund the roadway reconstruction program over six years. The last of those funds was expended in 2014. While much has been accomplished there are still roadway needs. To what extent would you support a property tax increase of an average of \$70 per year to support the roadway construction program over the next ten years?



The third question asked residents how many times, if any, they had experienced various drainage problems over the last 12 months. More than 6 in 10 residents reported never experiencing flooding in their basement and around 4 in 10 had never experienced street flooding on their block or yard flooding. Of those who did experience flooding, one-fourth of residents reported yard flooding.

Figure 6: Drainage Problems

Please indicate how many times, if any, you have experienced any of the following drainage problems over the last 12 months:

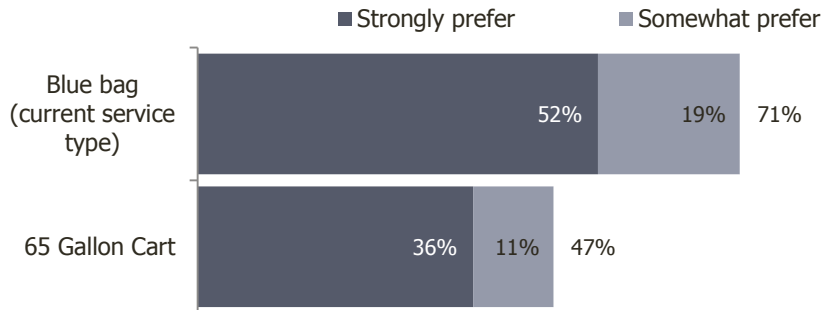


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The fourth question asked residents about their preference for two different types of recycling collection. More than 70% of residents said they would strongly prefer or somewhat prefer the blue bag (current service type) and close to half said they would strongly prefer or somewhat prefer a 65 gallon cart.

Figure 7: Container Types for Recycling Collection

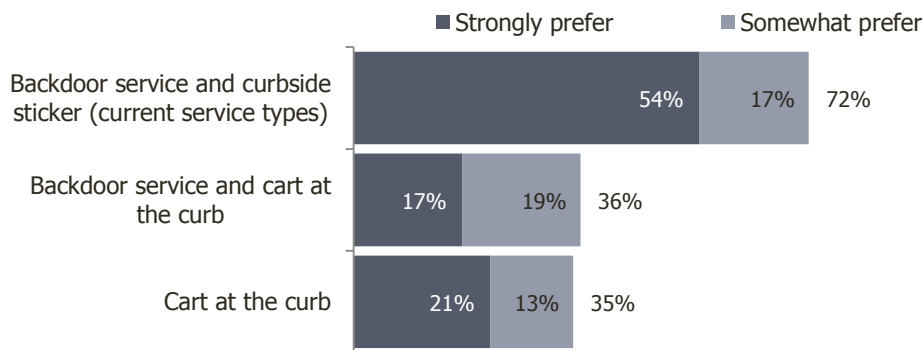
Please rate your preference for the following container types for recycling collection.



The fifth question asked what service type for refuse collection residents would prefer. Over 7 in 10 respondents said they strongly or somewhat preferred backdoor service and curbside sticker (current service types). Less popular were backdoor service and cart at the curb (36% strongly or somewhat prefer) and cart at the curb (35%).

Figure 8: Service Types for Refuse Collection

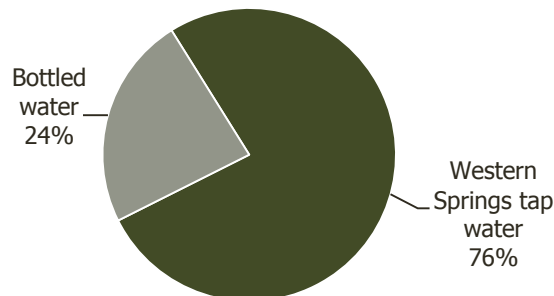
Please rate your preference for the following service types for refuse collection.



The sixth question asked residents what their primary source of drinking water was. More than three-fourths of residents said Western Springs tap water was their primary source with the remainder (24%) reporting using bottled water.

Figure 9: Primary Source of Drinking Water

What is your primary source of drinking water?

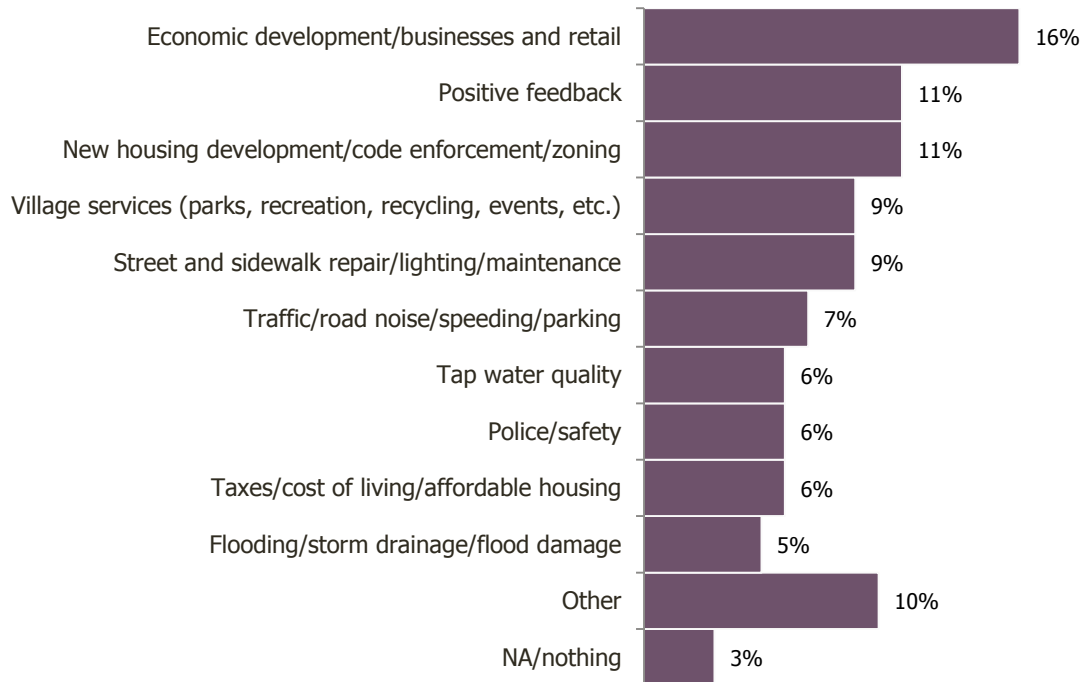


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The last question was an open-ended question in which residents were asked to provide any comments about living in the Village of Western Springs. Around 16% of respondents had comments relating to economic development/business and retail. For a more detailed report, please see the *Open End Report* under separate cover.

Figure 10: Comments About Living in Western Springs

Do you have any comments that you would like to share about living in the Village of Western Springs?



Conclusions

Western Springs residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Almost all respondents (97%) rated the overall quality of life in Western Springs as excellent or good. More than 9 in 10 residents said they would recommend Western Springs and plan to remain living in Western Springs for the next five years. Ratings for Western Springs as a place to live and as a place to raise children were either higher or much higher than ratings in comparable communities. Over 40 features of community characteristics across the eight pillars were rated higher than or similar to the national benchmark, which suggests that residents are generally pleased with living in the Village.

Safety is important to residents.

The facet of Safety was identified as one of the community focus areas for the Village. Almost all residents reported an overall feeling of safety, feeling safe in their neighborhood and in Western Springs' downtown/commercial area. Close to 90% of residents did not report a crime (a rate that is higher than in other communities) and more than 9 in 10 were not the victim of a crime. Additionally, about 9 in 10 residents positively rated Western Springs' ambulance/EMS, crime prevention and fire prevention services.

Economy may be an area for improvement.

Residents identified Economy as another potential focus area for the community. Ratings within the facet of Economy varied throughout the pillars. The number of residents who worked in Western Springs, close to one-fourth of respondents, was lower than in other communities. Ratings for Western Springs' vibrant downtown/commercial area, cost of living, shopping opportunities and employment opportunities were similar to the national benchmark. Of those residents who responded to the open ended question on the survey, 16% wrote in about economic development/business and retail, which was the most common issue cited (see the *Open End Report* under separate cover).

Residents are pleased with the ease of travel.

Within the pillar of Community Characteristics, almost all aspects of Mobility received ratings higher than the national benchmark, with 96% of residents rating the overall ease of travel as excellent or good. More than 90% of citizens rated the ease of walking and travel by car as excellent or good and around 8 in 10 positively rated travel by bicycle in Western Springs. Rates of walking or biking instead of driving and using public transportation instead of driving were higher in Western Springs than in other communities across the nation.